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State Representative

Mike Cooper

21st District

2001 SESSION REPORT

Summer 2001

Dear Neighbors,

Legislators — and the state at large — faced unique challenges this session. The Nisqually earthquake, an energy crisis and the worst drought in years, coupled with a slowing economy and two voter-approved initiatives, slowed the process considerably. When times are tough, people are supposed to come together to solve problems and help each other. Despite my highest hopes, bipartisan cooperation was in short supply and negotiations were long and arduous. In spite of that, we did register some real successes this session.

The first legislation we passed helped earthquake victims begin to rebuild their homes and low-income citizens to pay their energy bills. With the help of voters, we were able to enact the best budget for public education this state has seen in decades. While early budget proposals would have made deep cuts in cut health and human services, strong opposition from constituents helped us restore most of the money for those programs. Likewise, state employees made their case and will receive the same raise — 3.7 percent — Initiative 732 granted to teachers beginning in July.

On the flip side, we were unable to pass a proposal to solve our long-term transportation needs and a way to pay for them. While Democrats in the House and Senate and even Senate Republicans agreed on a solution, House Republicans failed to support the package, leaving us in a stalemate. We badly need to fix our roads, increase highway capacity and improve our mass transit system to move people and goods more quickly and efficiently. Otherwise, our state's economy will suffer and working people will pay a heavy price in lost jobs and earning power.

This newsletter provides a sampling of what we did or tried to do during the 2001 sessions. Please contact me if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Mike Cooper
State Representative
21st District

State Representative **Mike Cooper**



Education: our top priority



The 2001-03 budget is the best budget for education in decades. It emphasizes improving teaching and leadership in schools, continuing education reform, and strengthening accountability efforts. It also addresses the voter-approved Initiatives 728 and 732.

- Per pupil spending rises from \$5,009 to \$5,315 in 2002, then to \$5,484 in 2003.
- \$393.3 million for the new **Student Achievement Program**.
- \$318.4 million for K-12 state-funded staff cost-of-living increases over the next two years.
- \$82.5 million to continue the class-size reduction and extended learning components of the **Better Schools Fund**.
- \$2.8 million in focused assistance for consistently low-performing schools.
- \$6.6 million for increased **school safety**, including \$500,000 to develop a plan to prevent school bullying and harassment.

I was disappointed that the Legislature did not provide raises to ALL teachers, as called for by the initiative. This and failure of the low-performing school accountability bill were my chief disappointments for education.

Expanding higher education opportunities

- \$8.3 million in new funding for a **Technology Institute**, operating from the Tacoma branch of the University of Washington, to enable Washington to continue as a leader in the high-tech field.
- \$17 million to provide exceptional high-school students with **Promise Scholarships**.
- 3,575 new enrollments at our colleges and universities.

Maintaining health care services



Despite earlier budget proposals that cut big holes in the medical safety net, we were successful in continuing services for our most vulnerable citizens. All eligible children who apply for the **Children's Health Insurance Program** will be able to enroll. Medicaid benefits will be available to low-income women with breast or cervical cancer. Persons with disabilities who are able to return to work will be able to keep their much-needed Medicare coverage. We kept the adult dental, medically indigent and adult day care programs and gave long-term caregivers a much-needed 50 cents-an-hour raise.

Natural resources and the environment

This budget makes major improvements in our efforts to restore Washington's salmon runs, clean up toxic areas, and respond to water needs around the state. Unfortunately, we were unable to break loose an agreement on shorelines protection.

'A Fair Deal for Foster Kids'



Few headlines have been more disturbing the past few years than those about children under state care who are injured or worse. We're addressing these tragedies by reducing caseloads for CPS workers and supporting DSHS in its efforts to upgrade our foster care system so that it will merit certification by a national child-welfare organization. We're also concerned about the lack of mental health and counseling services available to foster children. Roughly 40 percent of them suffer from some kind of emotional or mental problem that merits services they aren't receiving.

2001 SESSION REPORT

Fixing the transportation mess

There's no doubt about it. The actions by some members of the Legislature to block a new transportation plan for the state was irresponsible. Our state's infrastructure has always taken precedence over partisan posturing and politicking — until now. It saddens me that the welfare of the entire state has been jeopardized — from the farmers who need to market their crops to the Boeing workers and parts that need to get to the plant on time.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation — a bipartisan group of civic and business leaders from across the state — studied our transportation system and needs for almost two years. They made a set of recommendations on what was needed to get Washington moving again. Their recommendations ranged from increasing the gas tax to improving efficiencies to allowing regions of the state to fund and solve their own worst problems.

The proposal that Republicans and Democrats in the Senate as well as House Democrats were prepared to offer the necessary votes to pass was based on this plan. We had already enacted promised efficiencies and indicated our willingness for further compromise on the issue. Partisan gridlock created by some Republican leaders stopped our efforts dead in their tracks. Instead of a plan to move forward, we have a "keep up" budget that does not fund many of the projects our area needs. Nor does it allow our region to decide which problems are our worst and to fix them ourselves.

These are the projects that will NOT happen as a result of the transportation budget gridlock:

- Adding HOV lanes and improving interchanges in Snohomish County



This project constructs HOV lanes on I-5 from Everett (State Route 2) south to the Boeing Freeway (State Route 526) and makes improvements to interchanges.

The HOV lane improvements on I-5 are required to complete the main HOV lane system. These HOV lanes through Everett in Snohomish County will save the typical driver in the afternoon rush hour commute 21 percent in travel time. Scheduled construction start: March 2003. The current budget includes less than 50 percent of the amount needed to complete the design.

- Finish rebuilding the interchange at 196th Street Southwest in Lynnwood to reduce congestion and improve safety. Scheduled construction start: March 2003. The current budget provides for completion of design but there is no funding for right-of-way acquisition or construction.

- Fixing the deteriorated concrete pavement on I-5 from south Seattle to the Snohomish County line to improve safety and protect the structure of the roadway. No funding has been provided for this project.

Why add HOV lanes?

HOV lanes move more people and freight in less time. On Interstate 405 near Bellevue, and I-5 near Shoreline, the HOV lanes carry almost as many people as the adjacent general purpose lanes. A recent report by the Washington State Transportation Center indicates that Puget Sound HOV lanes move people 25 to 50 percent faster than the general traffic lanes.

The Puget Sound HOV system is about two-thirds complete, with more than 190 miles of HOV lanes open for use, and just over 100 miles needed.

State Representative **Mike Cooper**



Pesticide 'right-to-know' finally passes

After four years of trying, I was successful in passing a bill that gives parents the right to know when and which pesticides are being used on school and day care premises. There is scientific evidence that pesticides and other toxic substances affect children worse than adults, and some children have medical conditions that make them even more susceptible to toxic substances.

Under the new law, schools must provide written notice each year, or upon enrollment, to parents and guardians of students describing the facility's pesticide plan, policies and methods of application. The school must also keep records and prepare annual summaries of what was used, when and where. These must be available as public records to parents or anyone who wants to inspect them. Schools also must have a plan for notifying parents at least 48 hours in advance of pesticide application. The plan must include posting a sign in a prominent place in the main office describing the date, time, place, method of application, and pesticide to be used.

Work on this bill was started in 1997 by the late Rep. Grace Cole of Shoreline.

Construction budget aids district



The \$879 million construction budget, known as the Capital Budget, bears good news for the cities of Edmonds and Mukilteo. The city of Edmonds will receive \$900,000 toward the purchase price from the state to help purchase Marina Beach Park. The city has the opportunity to buy 4.1 acres of land with 1,000 feet of shoreline for \$3.1 million. This property ranks first on the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's water access list.

The Center for Families, an existing child care facility at Edmonds Community College, will receive \$500,000 to help with the cost of building a new center, and there is an additional \$68,000 toward the cost of designing a new instructional lab at the college.

The state also will give the city of Mukilteo \$50,000 and deed Mukilteo State Park to the city to preserve park space and free day use for area residents, culminating the several year's work by the 21st District delegation.

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